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Press Item for the DCI

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UPI-1

(INDOCHINA)

WASHINGTON- THE SENATE, BENT ON RESTRICTING FUTURE U.S.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN CAMBODIA, DECLARED TODAY THAT IT WAS NOT TRYING TO STEAL THE PRESIDENT'S POWER TO COMMAND ARMIES AND PROTECT TROOPS.

MEMBERS VOTED OVERWHELMINGLY TO ADOPT ANOTHER SOFTENING AMENDMENT TO PENDING LEGISLATION THAT WOULD CUT OFF FUNDS FOR SUSTAINED U.S. WARFARE INSIDE CAMBODIA AFTER JUNE 30. THE AMENDMENT, SPONSORED BY SEN. ROBERT C. BYRD, D-W.VA., DECLARED THAT THE ANTIWAR MEASURE DOES NOT LIMIT "THE EXERCISE OF THAT CONSTITUTIONAL POWER WHICH MAY BE NECESSARY TO PROTECT THE LIVES OF UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES WHEREVER DEPLOYED."

THE PRACTICAL EFFECT OF THE COMPROMISE LANGUAGE WAS UNCLEAR. ADMINISTRATION SUPPORTERS SAID IT WAS A MAJOR CONCESSION BY THE MAJORITY ANTIWAR BLOC THAT WOULD GIVE THE PRESIDENT WIDE DISCRETION TO POUND THE ENEMY IF HE RETURNS TO BORDER SANCTUARIES IN CAMBODIA. BUT THE SPONSORS, SENS. JOHN SHERMANCOOPER, R-KY., AND FRANK CHURCH, D-IDAHO, SAID THEY HAD CONCEDED NOTHING AND THE AMENDMENT WAS MEANINGLESS.

DESPITE REASSURANCES OF THE SPONSORS THAT THE AMENDMENT HAD NO PRACTICAL EFFECT, SOME SENATE DOVES GRUMBLED THAT IT GAVE TOO MUCH LEEWAY TO THE PRESIDENT.

SEN. GEORGE MCGOVER, D-S.D., WHO IS SPONSORING LEGISLATION TO CUT OFF FUNDS FOR U.S. MILITARY OPERATIONS IN INDOCHINA BEGINNING DEC. 31, SERVED NOTICE IN ADVANCE THAT HE MIGHT VOTE AGAINST THE BYRD AMENDMENT.

IT WAS NOW CLEAR THAT THE COOPER-CHURCH MEASURE WOULD PERMIT THE PRESIDENT TO STAGE HIT-AND-RUN ATTACKS ACROSS THE BORDER IN PURSUIT OF FLEEING NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS, TO ATTACK THE ENEMY IN SELF DEFENSE AND TO RESCUE AMERICAN FORCES.

AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, THE AMENDMENT STILL CONTAINS STRONG LANGUAGE THAT WOULD DENY THE PRESIDENT FUNDS TO CONDUCT A SUSTAINED, OPEN-ENDED WR IN CAMBODIA OR TO COME TO THE RESCUE OF THE SAGGING ANTICOMMUNIST GOVERNMENT IN PHNOM PENH. THE SPONSORS BELIEVE UNDER THE LANGUAGE THE PRESIDENT WOULD BE INHIBITED BY LAW FROM TURNING CAMBODIA INTO ANOTHER FRONT OF THE VIETNAMESE WAR.

THE WHITE HOUSE ALLIES IN THE SENATE, ALTHOUGH CLAIMING A MAJOR VICTORY IN TODAY'S VOTE, WERE STILL NOT READY FOR A SHOWDOWN ON THE COOPER-CHURCH MEASURE. SEVERAL OTHER SOFTENING AMENDMENTS STILL WERE PENDING AND SOME MEMBERS WANT TO STALL UNTIL ALL AMERICAN FORCES HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM THE CAMBODIAN SANCTUARIES.

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These comments represent the initial and tentative reaction of the Office of Current Intelligence to the attached item from the news services.

1082

UPI-125

ADD 1 INDOCHINA, WASHINGTON (UPI-121)

THE VOTE WAS 79 TO 5.

CHAIRMAN J. WILLIAM FULBRIGHT, D-ARK., OF THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE SCOLDED CRITICS OF THE WAR FOR AGREEING TO THE AMENDMENT, CALLING IT "A POLITICAL MANEUVER SIMILAR TO THE GULF OF TONKIN RESOLUTION. THE 1964 TONKIN RESOLUTION AUTHORIZED FORMER PRESIDENT JOHNSON TO TAKE WHATEVER STEPS HE FELT WERE NECESSARY TO REPEL COMMUNIST AGGRESSION IN INDOCHINA.

SEN. GEORGE MCGOVERN, D-S.D., ATTACKED "CONGRESSIONAL WEAKNESS AND IRRESPONSIBILITY" AND URGED REJECTION OF THE AMENDMENT TO SAVE SENATORS FROM BECOMING "MENTAL AND MORAL MIDGETS WHIMPERING ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO DECIDE."

ADMINISTRATION FORCES COUNTED THE VOTE AS A MAJOR VICTORY BUT SENS. JOHN SHERMAN COOPER, R-KY., AND FRANK CHURCH, D-IDAHO, CONTEND THE MEASURE HAD NO PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE.

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